

## SPRINGSTEEN'S LYRICS AS LITERATURE

**Time & Place:** Tues/Fri 10:00-11:20 Packer Hall 249 (H2), 12:30-1:50 Education Building 205 (H3)

**Office Hours:** Tues/Fri 11:30-12:20 & by appointment **Office:** 223 Bliss **Office Phone:** 771-2346

**e-mail:** konkleli@tcnj.edu **Home Phone:** (609) 882-6964 (no calls after 10:00 pm, please)

### TEXTS

- 1) print off assigned Springsteen song lyrics from CANVAS
- 2) listen to Springsteen songs streamed through CANVAS (or CDs on reserve in library or other sources)
- 3) textbooks to be purchased at the TCNJ bookstore (or online):
  - Cullen, Jim. *Born in the USA: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition*
  - Sawyers, June Skinner, ed. *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*
  - Kirkpatrick, Rob. *Magic in the Night: The Words and Music of Bruce Springsteen*
- 4) books on 3-hour reserve at the library (go to Access Services desk across from the Reference Room)

### REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, GRADES

class participation 10 %	22 posts to CANVAS on readings 05% <sup>†</sup>
1 scholarship presentation & outline 20%	2 non-research argumentative/interpretative essays 30%
1 group discussion spokesperson 0%*	1 argumentative/interpretative research essay 25%
1 conference with instructor 0% *	1 presentation of oral abstract of research essay 5%
* (unless uncompleted; then lowers course grade)	1 CEL (community engaged learning) essay 5%

### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE & COURSE POLICIES

Come to class having listened to, read, and thought about the assigned album and reading, underlining important passages in the lyrics and textbooks, making notes in the margins, and be prepared to talk about them, and to take notes (but **not** on a laptop; bring a notebook). Bring with you to class your printed copy of the assigned album lyrics and the book in which there is an assignment for that class so you can follow and contribute to class discussion. You will receive one of three grades for class participation if you attend at least 90% of the class meetings: "A" (spoke up a few times every class), "C" (never or rarely spoke up in class), or "B" (somewhere in between "A" and "C"). If you are texting during class, you are not fully engaged with the classroom learning and your participation grade will be lowered; keep your cell phone silenced and put away. If you do not attend class, you obviously are not participating. If you have a death in the family or are too ill to come to class, contact me before the class or as soon after as possible to see about making it up, if that is possible. Assignments completed late without prior consultation with me will be graded down. I won't accept an essay more than 3 weeks late; thus, it would be marked down as a zero. (If you are having problems with a particular assignment or have three tests that week or whatever, talk to me beforehand and we'll see what we can work out for an extension.) If you turn in an essay, part or all of which you didn't write (plagiarism), you will receive an F for the assignment and probably for the course. Don't risk cheating, no matter what! If you're having any problem with doing the assignment, come to my office hours or make an appointment or just call or e-mail me; we'll talk and I'll help—that's what I'm here for.

### † ONLINE POSTINGS

Due **ONE HOUR BEFORE CLASS** at the latest, a paragraph-length (approximately 100-200 words) comment on the assigned reading of primary (Springsteen lyrics-usually for Tuesday's class) and secondary (Cullen, Sawyers, Kirkpatrick-usually for Friday's class) sources posted to CANVAS. Your comments aren't graded except for whether you post them on time and give them a legitimate effort. (In other words, you don't have to worry about polishing your prose, following a particular format, etc.; you simply have to put in the effort to give a thoughtful response to the album and reading.) The primary **purpose of this assignment is to get you to THINK about the songs/albums/books and the issues they raise (theological, philosophical, moral, political, social, psychological, aesthetic, other)**. For the songs that you comment on answer some of these questions: What is it about? What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What poetic or narrative techniques does Springsteen employ? Does it compare to other songs on this or another Springsteen album? (If you're ever at a loss for what to write, look at the document on CANVAS "One Approach to Analyzing Songs" and apply those criteria.) **You are NOT required to comment on every song**, but do try to make a comment about the album overall and some songs; go for depth, not breadth (which is usually superficial). You may also respond to what another student has posted about the song/album/secondary reading; **a secondary purpose of the assignment is to spark discussion of the issues outside of class**. Thus, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO READ YOUR CLASSMATES' COMMENTS BEFORE CLASS IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, OR AT LEAST BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS MEETING. I will try to read all of the comments before class to see if there are issues coming up that I'd like to address in class. By my count, there are **22 classes for which you need to post a comment on CANVAS, beginning with the SECOND class (on 8/30)**.

## SCHEDULE

underlined dates = scholarship presentations; (2) means there will be two students presenting on that album

- 8/27 Intro to course; read over syllabus and scholarship presentation on **CANVAS (click on syllabus and assignments)**  
**Read on CANVAS (click on Modules):** *Background Reading* (“Social-Cultural Background 1950s-1980s,” “Brief Overview of Rock,” “One Approach to Analyzing Songs.”);
- 8/30 **Listen to on CANVAS & print/ read lyrics from CANVAS (click on Modules/Lyrics):**  
“Pink Cadillac” from *Tracks* or *18 Tracks*  
“Seeds” from *Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band Live 1975-1985*  
“Streets of Philadelphia” from *Bruce Springsteen Greatest Hits* or *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*  
“Human Touch” from *Human Touch*  
“Living Proof” from *Lucky Town* or *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*  
**Read** Sawyers 1-25, Kirkpatrick Introduction; Cullen 1-5
- 9/3 **MONDAY CLASSES**
- 9/6 *Greetings from Asbury Park, New Jersey*; Kirkpatrick Chapter 1; Sawyers 28-39
- 9/10 *The Wild, The Innocent and The E Street Shuffle*  
9/13 Kirkpatrick Chapter 2; Sawyers 78-85, 337-346
- 9/17 *Born to Run* (2)  
9/20 Kirkpatrick Chapter 3; Sawyers 47-77; Cullen 26-40
- 9/24 *Darkness on the Edge of Town*  
9/27 **No class**; Kirkpatrick Chapter 4 **Essay #1 Due to CANVAS**
- 10/1 *The River*  
10/4 Kirkpatrick Chapter 5; Cullen 97-118
- 10/8 *Nebraska* (2)  
10/11 Kirkpatrick Chapter 6; Cullen 6-25
- 10/15 *Born in the U.S.A.*  
10/18 Kirkpatrick Chapter 7; Cullen 75-96; Sawyers 107-09, 120-25
- 10/22 *Tunnel of Love*  
10/25 Kirkpatrick 145-53; Sawyers 155-65; Cullen 157-89
- 10/29 **Mid-semester break, NO CLASS!!!**
- 11/1 Intro to Research Essay Assignment; **Essay #2 Due to CANVAS**
- 11/5 *The Rising* (2)  
11/8 Kirkpatrick Chapter 11; Cullen 193-204; Sawyers 358-365; **Research Essay Topic Proposal Due to CANVAS**
- 11/12 *The Ghost of Tom Joad*  
11/15 Kirkpatrick Chapter 10; Cullen 40-50, 67-74
- 11/19 *Devils and Dust*  
11/22 Kirkpatrick 193-200
- 11/26 *Magic*; Kirkpatrick 213-24  
11/29 **NO CLASS!!! Happy Thanksgiving!**
- 12/3 **Research Essay first draft workshop (bring 3 hard copies of your draft to class)**  
12/6 course evaluations; **Research Essay due to CANVAS**
- 12/? final exam period; **Research Essay Oral Abstracts**

## COURSE PURPOSE & LEARNING GOALS

Bruce Springsteen is arguably the most important American music artist, at least in the Rock genre, of the second half of the twentieth century. From his appearance the same week on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* in 1975, he has been hailed as more than just an entertainer. Like Bob Dylan before him, Springsteen has been recognized as a poet and short story writer working in popular music. This section of First Seminar will examine the lyrics of Springsteen's recorded songs as examples of literary writing that employ such poetic devices as imagery, metaphor, simile, personification, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance; and narrative techniques such as character, plot, setting, point of view, tense; and symbol, motif, theme. Themes include timeless universal issues such as growing up, love, death, political power, religious faith and doubt, etc. In addition, because of the upheaval of American society during Springsteen's apprenticeship in the 1960s and his early career in the 1970s, we will examine Springsteen's lyrics for how they manifest cultural issues of these decades (e.g., Vietnam, civil rights movements, recession's effect on the working class, etc.) and of the '80s and '00s as well (e.g., his 2002 album *The Rising* as a self-conscious response to 9/11). The course will also treat albums as analogous to books, each with a unifying principle of theme or type of music rather than a random collection of Springsteen's latest songs. Thus, each week students will read the lyrics of all the songs of an album and post a response to the work on CANVAS, and the organization of albums will be chronological so that it will be possible to gain insights into the shape of Springsteen's career and the development of the ideas and techniques in his *oeuvre*. Students will be required to write two analytical essays and a longer research essay on Springsteen's songs or albums, and a short essay on their CEL experience; give presentations on the scholarship on one album, and a summary of their own research-supported thesis; and participate in class discussion and CANVAS discussion. There will also be reading assignments from three books on Springsteen that incorporate many different approaches to understanding and appreciating his art.

## GRADING

At the end of the semester when I calculate the course grades I will use the numerical equivalents in the left column below for each grade. To arrive at your course grade, I will multiply the numerical score on each assignment times the percentage it is worth. That total will be converted to a letter grade for the course according to the percentages in the right column below.

A = 95	93 % and above = A
A- = 91	90 % and above = A-
B+ = 88	87 % and above = B+
B = 85	83 % and above = B
B- = 81	80 % and above = B-
C+ = 78	77 % and above = C+
C = 75	73 % and above = C
C- = 71	70 % and above = C-
D+ = 68	67 % and above = D+
D = 65	63 % and above = D
D- = 61	60 % and above = D-
F+ = 58	below 60 % = F
F = 55 or below (e.g., not completing an assignment earns 0 points)	

## SELECT TCNJ POLICIES

TCNJ's **attendance** policy is available on the web:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8162>

TCNJ's academic integrity (**cheating**) policy is available on the web:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>

TCNJ's **final examination** policy is available on the web:

<http://recreg.pages.tcnj.edu/269-2/>

TCNJ's Americans with **Disabilities** Act (ADA) policy is available on the web:

<http://affirm.pages.tcnj.edu/key-documents/>